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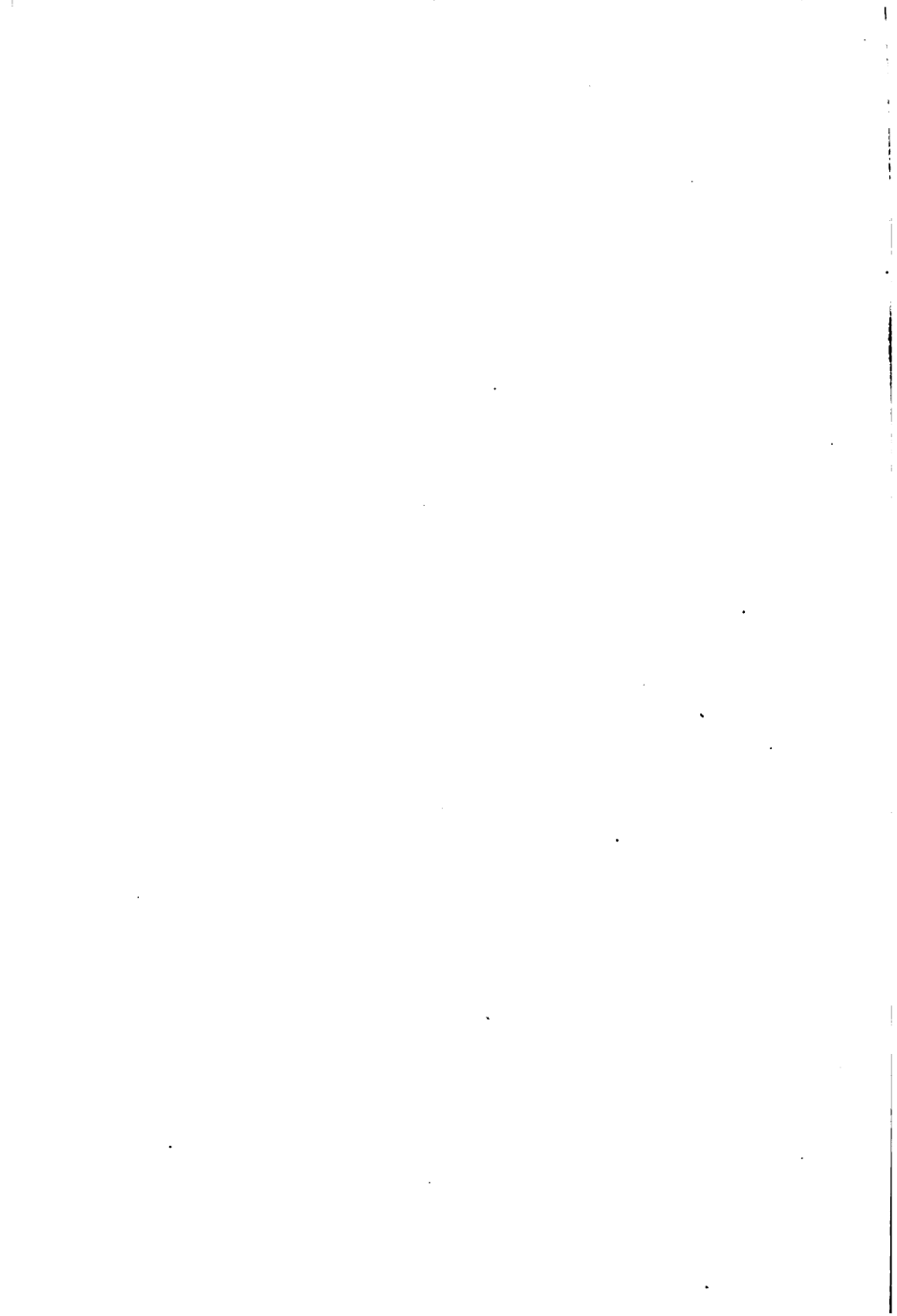


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THE JEW TO JESUS, AND OTHER POEMS

THE JEW TO JESUS

AND OTHER POEMS

FLORENCE KIPER FRANK



THE
JEW TO JESUS
AND OTHER POEMS

NEW YORK
MITCHELL KENNERLEY
1915

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Several poems of this volume date from the sixteen-year-old period; the title poem was done at nineteen; at least half of the book — including the sonnets — before twenty-one. Since then, my poetic intentions have somewhat changed. I have attempted, in the selection and deletion, objective judgment; if I have failed it is because this first book of poems, in going out from me, takes so much of me with it.

F. K. F.

Chicago, Illinois,
October, 1915.

PRINTED IN AMERICA

To J. L.

"You will wake, and remember,
and understand."

372230

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These poems first appeared in the following magazines: The Century, The Forum, McClure's Magazine, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, The International, Poet-Lore, The Masses, The Poetry Journal, The New England Magazine, Photoplay Magazine, The Little Review, Mother Earth, The Liberal Review, The Broadway Magazine, Out West, The Twentieth Century Magazine; and in these books: The Lyric Year, Thoughts in Verse and Prose, by Walter Bissinger (privately printed) and Hymn Book of the Central Congregation.

THE JEW TO JESUS

O MAN of my own people, I alone
Among these alien ones can know thy face,
I who have felt the kinship of our race
Burn in me as I sit where they intone
Thy praises,— those who, striving to make known
A God for sacrifice, have missed the grace
Of thy sweet human meaning in its place,
Thou who art of our blood-bond and our own.

Are we not sharers of thy Passion? Yea,
In spirit-anguish closely by thy side
We have drained the bitter cup, and, tortured, felt
With thee the bruising of each heavy welt.
In every land is our Gethsemane.
A thousand times have we been crucified.

APRIL AFTERNOON

THE wind drives keen as a sudden thought,
Where the headland swings sharp and free,
And the water beneath the wind and the sun
Clamors buoyantly.
And life drives keen as a sudden thought,
Keen as the flashing sea,
And O but I know it is keenly good
That I and the sun should be.

A GIRL STRIKE-LEADER

A WHITE-FACED, stubborn little thing
Whose years are not quite twenty years,
Eyes steely now and done with tears,
Mouth scornful of its suffering —

The young mouth! — body virginal
Beneath the cheap, ill-fitting suit,
A bearing quaintly resolute,
A flowering hat, satirical.

A soul that steps to the sound of the fife
And banners waving red to war,
Mystical, knowing scarce wherefore —
A Joan in a modern strife.

THE MOVIES

SHE knows a cheap release
From worry and from pain —
The cowboys spur their horses
Over the unending plain.

The tenement rooms are small;
Their walls press on the brain.
O, the dip of the galloping horses
On the limitless, wind-swept plain!

*"CITY OF HUGE BUILDINGS INTO WHICH
MEN HAVE POURED THEIR SOULS"*

CITY of huge buildings into which men have poured
their souls,
City of innumerable schools where little children are
taught and cared for,
City of the great University, discussing solemn and learned
questions,
City of well-dressed, beautiful women, sleek, satisfied, sure
of their clothes and of themselves,—
And their husbands sleek and satisfied also,—
I, a common prostitute, in the wan morning buying
cocaine,
Ask you the meaning of it all.

THE SONG OF THE WOMEN

THIS is the song of the women, sung to the marching feet,

Mothers and daughters of mothers, out in the crowded street,

Yea, and the mothers of mothers, white with the passing years —

This is the chant of the women, and wise is he who hears.

We are not beggars, O lordlings who sit in the seats of power,

Rulers of many millions and kings for a little hour,

We are not suers for favor, O you of the wide-spread land

Whom the kings cajole with flattery and a ballot stuffed in the hand.

We do not come with pleading, O masters who in your might

Set us our toil and our measure — the rhythm of your delight.

Slave have we been, and plaything, and mother to bear you a son —

But now is the plaything a woman and the toil of the slave is done.

We are proud and fearless, O brothers, right comrades of fearless men,

And you who are strong shall know us the sweeter now
than then;
For only the free and noble is mate to the noble and
free,
And the bondwoman's son is unworthy the son of the
freeman to be.

We have visioned a distant vision that has lured us with
its gleam,
And the marching lines and the tramping feet are hot
on the trail of a dream.
We have visioned a social justice that shall know the end
of might,
The poor and the weak and the thwarted we have seen
in living light.

And we cry to you, follow the vision, follow with us
abreast.
Brothers, comrades, lovers, the quest is a holy quest.
Out of the golden dawning, out of the bursting morn,
They are calling to us, united — the voices of them
unborn.

This is the song of the women, sung to the marching feet,
Mothers and daughters of mothers, out in the crowded
street,

Yea, and the mothers of mothers, white with the passing
years —

This is the chant of the women, and wise is he who
hears.

SUNDAY IN THE PARK

THE peanut-eating throngs tramp by
The animals in the zoo;
The sunlight blocks them into cubes,
And flashes from crimson and blue.

They take their pleasures stolidly;
Their souls are a grayish hue;
And yet — the thrill of the patient crowd
Shakes strangely me and you!

THE DOWN-TOWN STREETS

O THE woods are brilliant, the woods are clean,
But I wouldn't be there today,
Though Autumn's aflame in the arching trees,
And the wind is fresh and gay.

No, I wouldn't be with the painted trees;
It doesn't suit my mood.
I'd rather walk the down-town streets,
A-thrill with my solitude.

For I am alone in the down-town streets,
I, in the clamor and crowd.
They surge. They break. They encompass me.
"Ho! Ho!" I could shout aloud.

WINTER LIGHTS

IN dusk of winter nights
When all the world is gray,
Suddenly gleam the lights,
Both near and far away.

They bloom, they gleam so soft!
O the glad surprise!
On poles they're hung aloft,
Against the deepening skies.

Suddenly, O my heart,
Forgetting this will be,
Again the eager start,
The pleasure keen and free!

I think a thousand times
We could see them bloom and gleam,
And each of a thousand times
A new delight it would seem.

THE "L" EXPRESS

RACKETY — rackety — ziz — ziz — rack,
The cars of the Elevated clack along the track.
With a jerk and a whirr and a devil-may-care,
Along we go racketing, up in the air.

Garbage in the alleys bursts its dirty cans,
Flapping linen gets the dust a quick breeze fans,
Slattern women gossip on a rickety stair —
Grime and ugly living and a stale despair!

Rackety — rackety — ziz — ziz — rack,
The cars of the Elevated clack along the track.
Why are we journeying and where — where — where?
Hurry, hurry, hurry, we've no time to care!

THE LAKE

BY the side of my city lies the lake, the large, spreading lake, myriad-minded.

It knows all thoughts and all passions and has resolved them and made them one with itself and its vastness.

It knows the shame of the city and its filth; it knows its glory, bright and burning as a sunrise.

It knows its infinite lassitude and its infinite effort — the gray pall of futility and the surge and break of the waves of life, pushing they know not wherefore.

The lake answers all and answers nothing, and is as eternity is, spreading vast and quiet by the shores of conscious existence.

*"WE HAVE DONE HIM TO DEATH,
YOU AND I"*

WE have done him to death, you and I — this man
with the bleeding body.

Look at him, as he lies there decently fixed on the
stretcher!

Look at his matted hair and his mouth half-open in amaze-
ment.

(He forgot we would do him to death, and he is amazed
at the notion.)

He's not a romantic sight — a woman would be more
romantic.

A young girl's body lying there, the crowd a month would
remember.

But this fellow we've done to death — "Um — well!
Such accidents happen!

Fell from a building, did he? I suppose that he lost his
footing.

Ugh, it's a ghastly sight! I wonder, poor chap, if he's
married!

Last week, on Farlan's new building, a workman — O
yes, twenty stories!

Ought to pay twelve per cent. Jove, Farlan's a head on
his shoulders!"

YOU

I GO my way complacently,
As self-respecting persons should.
You are to me the rebel thought,
You are the wayward rebel mood.

What shall we share who are separate?
We part — as alien persons should.
But O, I have need of the rebel thought,
And a wicked urge to the rebel mood!

ON A GIRL SEEN IN A DANCE-HALL

A TEMPLE dedicate to the dance! —
Stale cigarettes and five-cent beer
On sloppy tables! Now a leer
Lascivious, there a provocative glance!
The air's so dense that you can't breathe,
And yet you find it hard to leave.

For one slim little dancing girl
Has fired your fancy, as she sways,
Abandoned, in the devious ways
Of the rhythm's quick, voluptuous whirl —
So gay she is, so wild and free,
So mad with innocent ecstasy.

And in a moment it's a mist,
The dirty lust and cheap delight,
And through the moon-drenched, Grecian night
Call "Evoë!" the mad lips kissed
By Bacchus to the frenzy rare
Of the votaries with the vine-draped hair.

And she, your priestess wild of joy,
With glistening breast and whirling thigh,
Shouts freest in her ecstasy,
In her hymning of the ecstatic Boy,
While like a flame the throng burns through
Dark thickets drenched with the moon and the dew.

ON A GIRL SEEN IN A DANCE-HALL 19

Dark thickets drenched with the dew and —“ Lil,
Pipe the guy with his think-tank on the blink!
Hey, mister, won't you have a drink?
I'll have one, too — sure! — if you will.”—
Poor tawdry little priestess in
The temple of cheap beer and sin!

*"O, I LOVE TO BE ALIVE IN THE
STREETS"*

O, I love to be alive in the streets,
In the streets of the friendly city!
Pleasant, odd sights one meets —
Women flashing and pretty,
Some undoubtedly piquant and witty.
It's fun to be alive in the streets,
With the constant hum and patter
Of feet, and the constant clatter;
Motors tearing by,
Shop-windows assaulting the eye!
It's so jolly to be in the streets
When the air is bright and keen,
And one is snug and clean,
Well-fed and in new clothes!
Then one actually knows
That the world, on the whole, is all right.
But I'd hate to be hungry and white
In the streets of the friendly city,
And have no place for the night.
Yes, that would be a pity!

*"O WHEN WILL GOD COME AS A
MIGHTY FLOOD"*

OUT in the blue of the wind and sea
The gulls dip white and soar,
And the soul of me is free, is free
With the waves and the winds of the shore.
Sisters, sisters, O let me be!
I am one with the winds and the shore!

You would not pray to the dipping wind,
You would not ask of the sun,
And the tides do not know of the sins that are sinned,
And the crimes that men have done.
And I am one with the dipping wind,
And fierce and pure as the sun.

I am done with your city's tenement streets
And the babies that whine and die,
With your acrid smells and your fetid heats,
And the girls in the night that lie
Wrapped seared with flame in their winding sheets
And pray that their souls may die.

I am done with your factories' crazy thud,
Where the metal is more than flesh.
I am done with the knowledge of tears and blood.
O the winds of the sea are fresh,

" O WHEN WILL GOD "

And the sunlight flood is a cleansing flood
That shall wash my soul afresh.

O when will God come as a mighty flood
To wash the world afresh!

SONNET

(Written for the Lincoln Day celebration of a Chicago Settlement.)

WHAT answer shall we make to them that seek
The living vision on a distant shore?
What word of life? The nations at our door,
Believing, cry, "America shall speak!"
We are the strong to succour them the weak,
We are the healers who shall health restore.
Dear God! where our own tides of conflict pour,
Who shall be heard above the din and shriek?

Who, brothers? There was one stood undismayed
'Mid broil of battle and the rancorous strife,
Searching with pitiful eyes the souls of men.
Our martyr calls you, wants you! Now, as then,
The oppressed shall hear him and be not afraid;
And Lincoln dead shall lead you unto life!

UNSEEING

WE are a people powerful and great.
We have writ large across the continent
The wonder of our working; we have pent
The forces of the earth to serve our state.
Athrob we toil, conscious of driving fate,
Upon our stern and anxious business bent.
Thousands upon their thousand tasks intent
Heap for us gold with zeal insatiate.

We are a people powerful — and yet
Unseen the gull her seaward voyage flies,
The morning grass, untrod, lies fresh and wet.
O God, we are too busy for Thy skies!
Forgive us if the sunrise we forget.
We are a people great in enterprise.

THE ENTR'ACTE

(Sothorn and Marlowe in "Romeo and Juliet.")

THE act is ended and the curtain drops.
The garish lights remorselessly display
Our buzzing friends of the calm everyday
Appareled in "the latest" from the shops.
My neighbor, blond, rotund, his forehead mops.
The orchestra some opening notes essay.
The usher's nasal "Pictures of the play!"
Relentlessly intones, abruptly stops.

But on my spirit lies a witching power,
A glamour and a glow of other light.
From Capulet's stern eyes I shrink and cower,
Still leap I with Mercutio to the fight,
Still hear I in the scented midnight hour
The silver tones of Juliet thrill the night.

TENNYSON'S "THE LOTUS EATERS"

THE dreamy languor steals into my brain.
I cannot help but let my spirit flow
In music, on the golden stream and slow
Of liquid, slipping verse. I loose the chain
Of the weary world, like some pale, tired Elaine,
To lay me on the barge that warm winds blow,
To feel a mystic breathing sweet and low,
That floats and drifts me from our heavy pain.

But I have known the cool of mountain tops,
And in my blood the tonic pulse and zest,
And still I feel the calling of the sea —
The passionate, endless energy that stops
Only with death, and with sublime unrest
I hear man's spirit crying unto me.

MATTHEW ARNOLD


THEY wrong him who know only a fevered soul
Sick with the crude disorder of the time,
Complaining in melodious, fretful rhyme
— Since that his heart is ill — the earth's not whole.
They do him wrong who see as ultimate goal
Of that large spirit, a high, windless clime,
Golden, remote, insufferable, sublime,
Where stainless Peace meek bows her aureole.

No, in the struggling press and clamorous life
Of this difficult world, with brawlers turbulent,
“Good cheer!” he cried to champions of the strife,
“Courage!” to those aghast with pale defeat;
Of the great hearts of heroes reverent,
By Oxus, in the torrid London street.

THOREAU

(After seeing Walden Pond.)

THE green things in their growing felt his heart
As quick with budding impulse as their own;
The solitude had found a solitude
As wild and holy; the keen starlight saw
A gleam as keen and subtle; the high trees
Heavenward reaching, reached and yearned through him,
And in his blood their living sap was quick.
The candor of the good brown earth he knew,
The wide simplicity of growing fields,
The mystery and rapture of the dawn.
Shimmer and depth of his dear pond he held,
Shimmer and liquid depth, and glancing beams
Of sunlight on its surface — these he knew
As in himself, this lover of the woods.



"THINK NOT WE ARE DESERTED"

THINK not we are deserted! One by one
The gods must leave as they have left of yore.
Pan pipes no longer on the golden shore,
And Buddha of the wistful eyes is gone.
Isis, Osiris, their high task is done.
Thunders cloud-girt Mount Sinai nevermore.
Yea, he must pass at whose name we adore,—
Even the gentle Mary's wounded son.

Yet are we not forsaken, nor can be.
The vibrant heart of worlds will never tire.
Still speaks He in the roaring of the sea.
Still kindles He the urge of man's desire.
Broods o'er the world the eternal mystery.
Still is the breathing God a living fire.

LOVE SONNETS OF AN INVALID

(R. B. S.— born 1850 — died 1874.)

I

IF I might render him the service small
That women love — to watch beside his bed,
To hold upon my heart his weary head,
To wait his sweet home-coming in the hall,
To be with glad feet ready at his call,
Knowing the ways serene where he has led —
O this were sacramental wine and bread,
The holy joy for which we give our all!

To bear him children — at my breast to feel
The little life which is both his and mine,
The tangible form of love and final seal;
Within his eyes to see the gladness shine,
Within his heart to know the soft warmth steal —
Dear God! I lie upon my bed supine!

II

The watchword that is taught us is reserve —
We women, whose first thinking is to know
Hunger for loving, who are quick to glow
With every tremulous passion that we serve.
Still a calm modesty we must preserve.
Still on our lips and bosoms must be snow.

The love that leaps to speech we dare not show,
That we be wooed and woo not, to observe.

But I who needs must cry unsatisfied,
Whose desolate pain life has no calm to still,
I who must yearn with aching arms and wide,
Dare I not splendidly my full soul spill,
Fearless and frank, scorning my woman pride,
Some measure of my being to fulfill!

III

I am all spirit to him, a sad soul
Here disembodied even before the grave,
Renunciant of the joys that others crave,
My lips athirst for Death's sweet, bitter bowl;
And he with priest-like fervor would console,
With steady hand serene to calm and save
The darkening heart that may not be too brave
When it shall reach the uttermost of dole.

And he to me — O body of me and heart! —
Is potency and longing and desire;
He is that life in which I have no part,
The will to be and do that does not tire,
And at the touch of him there glow and start
Strange latencies and stir of passion's fire.

IV

For he has touched me, spirit though I seem.
His hand lay on my hand a moment's space,
His face a moment trembled toward my face,
So near I dared not think, for joy supreme.
O God! there rolls between us the dark stream!
And in my life, foreordered, is no place
For the tumultuous sweet of his embrace,
Shaking too humanly my world of dream.

Yet that his touch should linger so and burn,
Should thrill me to such knowledge wild and sweet,
Drawing my life as waters moonward yearn!
O love of mine, if only it were meet
That, radiant and gracious, I should turn
To cast my being's fullness at your feet!

V

Yet I need not the actual touch or word.
I catch, within the silence, messages
More pregnant with love's wonderment of bliss
Than any that the bodily touch has stirred.
Deeper than sinks thy voice is the sound heard
Within my soul's own vivid silences,
And though I have not felt thy yearning kiss,
There glorifies me the rich grace inferred.

And so I feel, when thou art gone, a sense
More deeply and more intimately fraught
With thy dear being's meaning, more intense
With wonder of thee, and the fear I fought
Is shadow, and the knowledge, innocence,—
And golden-full the miracle is wrought!

VI

I must renounce it, then — to touch your hand,
To look upon your all too troubling face,
To feel, like scent of flowers, the subtle grace
Of you steal over me. I must command
My soul that it should steadily withstand
The lure of you, and your loved name efface
From out my life where I have given it place,
As children blot out letters on the sand.

And yet I cannot see the sunset sky,
I cannot joy at some deed rarely kind,
I cannot hear a child's heartbroken cry,
But you are with me in my inmost mind,
And with all things I do, or low or high,
Still you are interwoven and entwined.

DAWN IN THE HILLS

OUT of the vast,
Flooding and flowering the cool, skyey vast,
Day, day at last!
Squandering, spilling, pouring white-flecked fire,
Higher and higher
The light of the sun mounts into the dim of the sky.
And all the little fields that lie
At the foot of the hills that hold them in mothering
tender,
Sweet with translucent, shimmering green,
Lay themselves bare to the sun, and the hill-trees slender,
Upward reaching thin arms of prayer,
A-shiver with ecstasy, tipped with sheen,
Sway to the quivering call of the fresh-stirring air.

Through the night have I waited Thy summons, through
the night have I lain
Racked with unutterable, ancient, blackening pain.
And the soul of me touched not Thy presence nor felt
Thee about me,
And the soul of me, sick with its hate and dismay, was
minded to rout Thee,
Yea, from itself to tear Thee, enduring without Thee.
But now I have found Thee again, O my Comrade,
again!
In the light of the morning and white of the dawn I be-
hold Thee.

See, with my arms outstretched, I enclose and enfold
Thee.

With a shout that the darkness is light, I enclose and
enfold Thee.

Now feed me with life as with rain is nourished the
flower!

Crown me with ecstasy, drench me with power!

See, I am bare to Thee as the fields are bare to the sun.

Resplendent, vivid, ever-living One,

This is the moment, this the creative hour!

Lo, I am one with Thee,

I partake, I am washed anew.

Out of lies this is true,

Out of the dark of lies and entangling hates this is true,

That Thou who art ever-living, out of death shalt create
anew.

What weakling spirit knew thee gray and old,

Thou flaming one,

Thou fructifying sun,

Thou trumpet-call of morning to the blood,

Thou surge of the earth flood!

Youth of the universe art Thou, militant, bold.

Naught to Thee is decay,

When the spirit rots in its shroud,

And the horrible thoughts of night have way,
And life is a noisome cloud;
A noisome cloud of the fen,
Dank with the spirit's decay!
O out of the morning laughest Thou then,
Out of the singing day.
Out of the morning leapest Thou,
Laughing at fear and pain,
And the horrible thoughts of night give way,
And the soul is created again.

The hills now are flooded with light and the trees rejoice
With happy voice.
The smell of the sweet, green things is in the air.
The breeze is a prayer.
And my soul, O my Comrade, my living soul is a prayer.

And rapture gives way to peace,
The dawning faints into the day.
Out of night have I found release,
Out of death, the way.
And my heart is calm with Thee, my heart that went
forth with a shout.
Thou hast compassed me wholly about.
With the floods of Thy peace Thou hast compassed me
wholly about.
I am elate with power.

Past is the creative hour.
I am calm for the ways of men.
Shall I not proclaim Thee then
To the doubting lives of men!
Out of the dawn have I plucked Thee.
I go to the world of men.

NIGHT-MOOD

THE night presses close around.
The stars are large above us, and the ground
Is tremulous beneath our feet.
At the edge of the earth we stand and hear the beat
Of the moving universe, world upon world in space,
World upon world in the stretching dark of space.

O your dear face!
Your dear, familiar, tender, human face,
Alight with love for me as with a guarded flame!
The pull of us toward each other! the appealing grace
Of the loved bodies! Say again my name!
Say it over and over! We have no other speech.
We stammer each to each
Meanings that break within us, they are so great!
Meanings that break and falter —

The winds are articulate
Within the summer night. The wind of the world
Is on our cheeks. Surely the infinite
Blew upon us and we shuddered. The fires of God
Are underneath us, and this planet's sod
Is as a shell. Where shall we flee from God?
He presses too close upon us. O, in all space
What then shall shield me but your bending face!
Closer! closer! What are we? A shifting breeze

That the winds of the world will gather. Yes, and
these

Our souls are separate. O, as a little breeze

We shall blow into the darkness. Shelter me from
space.

The night is too vast a place!

THE MOTHER

THEY have sought wild places,
And touched the wind-bound Pole,
But I shall go a-venturing
After a soul.

Nine long moons shall I wander,
And who is there will say
What fugitives and dreams I shall meet
Upon the way.

Stark is the journey, unknown;
Yet shall I traverse pain,
For a soul is a shy, bright, wild thing,
And strange to attain.

I shall pluck it out of eternity.
O I shall laugh with glee!
And high in my hand shall I hold it,
For God to see.

God is a bold Adventurer,
He is making moons and suns,
And out to the daring heart of me
His laughter runs.

Men have sought wild places,
And touched the wind-bound Pole,
But I have gone a-venturing
After a soul.

MOTHERHOOD

A HOLY thing has this day come to pass —
Through pain and anguish have I brought forth life,
Flesh of my flesh, soul of my soul, a babe,
A tiny, helpless being by my side,
A heart-beat dropped from me, a miracle.

HYMN

IN mists of ages hideth
The word that once was true;
The living God abideth,
And he is ever new.
The idols crack and perish,
The altars old decay;
The heart of man must cherish
The God of his today.

What though from Sinai's mountain
No fiats forth are hurled!
Like to a pulsing fountain,
God's hope pervades the world.
No more in voice of thunder
He crasheth from the skies;
Yet know thy God — O wonder! —
Within thy brothers' eyes.

His witnesses are many;
They are not far to seek; —
He giveth speech to any
Who in his name would speak.
All are His priests anointed,
All are His chosen race,
To speak the word appointed
In each and every place.

A SONG FOR IRELAND

WHY do you call me so, mother, mother?
Why do you call me so over the sea?
O I am weary, my son, and forsaken.
The voice of my loneliness calls unto thee.

Why are you lonely, mother, mother?
Why are you lonely over the sea?
My beautiful fields have they taken, taken,
They have taken my beautiful fields from me.

Why do you want me, mother, mother?
Why do you want me over the sea?
The sons of my love must arise and redeem me.
I have bled for them, they shall bleed for me.

See, I am coming, mother, mother!
See, I am coming over the sea!
A precious and bitter boon will I give thee —
The gift of death for the love of me.

ON THE DEATH OF A BOY POET

QUIETLY pulsed, the friend of growing things,
Companioned by the loveliness of earth
He walked and was not lonely. The still night,
The subtle influence of the wind and flowers
And star-gleam and the stirring of the Spring,
The fall of silver waters in the sun,
Wrought in his blood a quickening and a peace.
The mystic Mother fed him with her dews
And breathed upon him — breathed the holy breath
That stirs the burgeoning of the poet's soul.
All high thoughts came to minister — gentle love,
Fair courtliness and the desire for truth.
We live but dully through the years, but he
With vivid heart, intensely, his small cup
Of exquisite life poured forth and passed to rest.

THE KISS

SHEER joy of youth and madness of the moon
And all the illimitable longings of my blood
Leapt in me. I was half mad with the sweet
Delirious feel of living. It was then
I caught her eyes upon me, misty veiled,
And unashamed I kissed her on the mouth,
Holding my perfect moment, proud and glad.

HORSEBACK RIDING IN CALIFORNIA

DO you remember how we swung
Around the edge of the mountain path,
Where over us the gray rocks hung,
Above us screamed the eagle's wrath?
O the world was young and the world was young,
And we bathed and dipped in the sun's gold bath.

The little stones sped 'neath their flying feet,
You on Lady and I on Jack,
And the beat of their hoofs was our own hearts' beat,
As they thundered up the mountain track.
O the world was sweet and the world was sweet,
And could there be ever of joy a lack!

Your lips were parted in sheer delight,
And the color laughed in your luring face,
And your hair that held the rich dusks of night
Floated and gleamed in the sun's gold grace.
O the world swung right and the world swung right,
And my heart kept pace with your heart's swift pace.

Then, as a sudden curve we turned,
Flashed before us the flaming sea!
Gold and silver and blue it burned,
And the beat of its waves was our own hearts' glee,
And all in a moment life's best we learned —
All that is and that is to be.

A SPRINGTIME HOLIDAY

O, THE grass is sunlit emerald, the sky is blue and
 pearl,
There's a beat within a man's blood, a quick breathing in
 a girl.
Now the flowers are sweetly stirring where the sun and
 earth-sod lay,
For the earth is quick with loving for a Springtime
 holiday.

There's a joy within the treetops that have startled into
 green,
And the leaves are rocking riotous, with bits of blue
 between.
O, the road is white, and vocal with "Away! Away!
 Away!"
And my heart has run to meet you for a Springtime
 holiday.

At the edge of dewy woodlands drop the petals fast and
 white.
Love, now for a moment love me! while your eyes are
 tender bright!
Do light loves with summer wither? Well, so die the
 flowers of May.
And my heart is good for loving for a Springtime holiday.

SONG

HALF the stars are dim with weeping,
Antoinette.

See the moon how palely sleeping,
Antoinette.

Faint and far the heifer's lowing,
Faint the night wind coolly blowing,
Dim and cool the river flowing,
Antoinette! Antoinette!

All my heart is faint and lonely,
Antoinette!

Still it yearns "I need thee only,
Antoinette."

As the wind yearns toward the river,
Setting its deep heart aquiver,
Yearns toward thee my life forever,
Antoinette! Antoinette!

AT EVENING

A MAN goes forth in the morning light,
The troubled ways of the world to roam.
A little boy returns at night,
Home to my heart which is his home.
His head is sweet upon my breast,
And on his eyelids there is rest.

They thought him very big and strong
As he battled in the city's din
And earned us a living all day long.
O boy of mine, my boy within
My arms, my baby on my breast,
Rest now, my tired man-child, rest!

THE FRIENDS

"Thy voice is like to music heard ere birth . . .
Thy face remembered is from other worlds."

NOT as two lovers did we wander close
In ancient Babylon, to drink the dim
And mystic wine of evening — yet we two
Have been together — girls, I think, as now.
Did we not sit at Dido's feet and watch
The queen's face tremble toward Æneas? . . . White
And pitiful you grew — I see it yet! —
When the two deathless lovers lay asleep,
Paola and Francesca, pale in death.
You gripped my hand and looked into my face.
I see again your wild, sweet, piteous eyes! . . .
Dear heart, do you remember how we plucked
The white may-blossom, and ran laughing by,
When Shakespeare called us in the village street? . . .
Tired we were and sad, at close of day,
When we were driven homeward from the fields,
Two slaves in green Kentucky. How you drooped,
And had not strength to lift your basket's weight!
I loved you then with a fierce bitterness.
I love you now not for yourself alone
That moves and breathes beside me, but for those
Far other selves that walked with me as friend.

A LITTLE CHILD TO HER MOTHER

DEAR mother mine, how tenderly
Thy quiet gray eyes look on me —
How quietly and tenderly!

O mother mine, a little mouse
Am I, and this our little house,
And thou the mother of the mouse.

Sweet mother, now a little bird
I am, with tiny wings unstirred,
A little cooing, nestling bird.

Dear mother, God is far away,
And though I look for him all day
I cannot see so far away.

But, mother dearest, thou art near;
A very heaven on earth is here
When thou art loving and so near.

Perhaps for little girls like me
God meant that's what their heaven should be —
For tiny little girls like me.

THE YOUNG GIRL TO HER FUTURE LOVER

I CANNOT tell if I have seen his face
Among the crowd, or if some alien place
Hold him, until his hand shall meet my own.
And yet I never now am quite alone;
But in all things his presence touches me.
I feel him in the beating of the sea,
The little rippling shadows are his smile,
His is the tenderness in Spring's sweet wile,
The growing grass with joy of him is fraught,
The breeze upon my face is his heart's thought.

HYMN TO THE WINGÉD NIKÉ

I

AN earth-bound priestess, hampered and secure,
I scarcely dare approach thee, sovereign form,
I scarcely dare essay the eager joy
Of movement and of fire that is thy heart.

Yet know
There lives in me the glow,
The restless glow and bright of thy desire —
Pulsating, wingéd heart of joy and fire.

I too aspire
As thou, O goddess; I too feel the urge
Of passions and of utterances high
That break through to the infinite and cry
Against the clouds their pulsing movements vast;
My soul has wings like thine;
And those full limbs that flaunt
The fluttering drapery,
And that deep bosom free,
Are mine, are mine!

2

What quickeneth the urge
Within thee? Dost thou feel the sweep and surge
Of the vast flowing of illimitable life,
Life beyond life, and striving beyond strife?
Ah, from what amplitude of powers emerge

That sovereignty and strength that thrill through thee,
 Thou vivid, burning song of victory!
 Large freedom's high imagination thou,
 Sweeping the cleavéd air with haughty stroke,
 As if thy great life broke
 Free from our prisoning cells that bruise and bow.

The poet thou,
 The poet's soul all vivid things above,
 More vivid and more vital in its love
 Than love of woman who has waked to love.
 Triumph of passionate justice and its might,
 Triumph of soul and its august decrees,
 Triumph of right!
 Ah, what vast things to be are in thy sight!

3

Art thou indeed the Godhead, molded strong
 In the calm marble, which must needs be white
 Because it focuses all shades of light —
 The crimson passion, and the yearning hue
 Of the pale, spiritual blue!
 Dost all to thee belong —
 Emotion and emotion strong or weak?
 All powers and shades of song? —
 Ah, couldst thou speak!
 Speak to me, bend above me, touch my lips,

Anoint me with thy presence, consecrate
My soul unto thy state,
And I shall burst into such power of words
As men have waited for with eager hearts
Since last the gods walked big among us.

4

No,

It may not be!
I may not see thee naked-free and pure,—
An earth-bound priestess, hampered and secure.
'Tis but for me to see
The splendor keen that darts
From out thy garment folds.
Some touch upon my hand I know, some far
Faint rustle of thy gown;
And yet my quick heart holds
Its yearning, aching, passionate dream of thee.

SONNETS

DOES not great love with some rich grace endow
The creature loved thus fully and aright,
Does it not circle him in living light
And lend an added splendor to his brow,
So that among the crowd men marvel how
He grew to be thus luminously bright,
Aware themselves of blessing from the sight
Ere they pass on? — So thou, beloved, thou
Surely some bright and visible sign must bear
Of that full love with which I circle thee,
All that for thy sake I would be and dare
Some record in thine eyes the throng should see.
O surely those thou passest are aware
That I have spent my spirit splendidly!

I would not love thee only as thou art,
In conscious strength of man's maturity,
Nor even as in the future thou wilt be
When we shall grow together, heart to heart.
But in the past, too, would I have my part,
That in my eyes, love-tender, thou shouldst see
The shy and hidden hours of memory,
The joy of boyhood and its bitter smart.
Yes, I would reach back in the unknown years,
My love with fuller meaning to endow.
My yearning arms would still thy childish fears;
With lips on which thy passion pressed its vow,
Dim-seeing through the warm, sweet rush of tears
Thy mother's kiss I'd place upon thy brow.

The glistening shore, frost-whitened, knows no sound.
The moon her pouring radiance downward flings
Like silver bounty spilled for heavenly kings.
In living light the sky and sea are drowned.
An awe more still than silence holds us round.
No ease of speech the enfolding moment brings
Our two hearts pregnant with unuttered things,
Twin souls by knowledge and by mystery bound.

So deep a wonder broods upon the sea,
So vivid is the universe with power,
I fear 'twill rend our little lives apart.
I faint with nearness of eternity.
My soul too conscious grows in this white hour.
O love, the finite shelter of your heart!

Some say they glimpse belief, are trustful, nay
Have certainty, that this is not the whole,
That we but grope here toward some unseen goal
Whose splendors mock the glory of our day.
I do not know; God has been far away
When I have prayed; and only my own soul
Answered unto my unbelieving soul,
"I do not know; I doubt; I dare not say."

But thou — wilt thou be silent! I demand
An answer! I am blind but thou canst see.
I am dark, but now thou at last canst understand.
Thou must share with me, dost thou hear! — thou must
surely share.
See, when I lift my twisted hands in prayer,
It is to thee I pray — to thee, to thee!

O dear dead soul, I glory thou art free
From fevers and from poisons of our slime,
From wounds of circumstance and hurts of time,
And all the bonds that hold my life in fee.
I joy to know thee in serenity,
The golden splendor of an ampler clime,
To know thy spirit's striving rounds sublime
Into the full orb of eternity.

My soul finds refuge in this single thought —
Yes, in the fever and the stress and pain —
That thou art safe, untouched, and all aloof
From worldling's malice and the fool's reproof,
That my most bitter loss is thy sweet gain,
Though thy deliverance is with anguish bought.

Often when life about me flushes red,
When youth is noisy with glad rioting,
When love and light and laughter have their fling,
Softly I muse, "How fares it with the dead!
Have they pale comfort in their narrow bed?
Lie they too still to stir at call of Spring?
Or do their spirits still rejoice in sting
Of high endeavour urging heart and head?"

But this I know: If action be the law,
If the good warfare wages there as now,
If strife and clamor be on battlefield,
Then are you there, a sword, a flame, a shield,
A perfect knight, unsullied, without flaw,
With high resolve still glowing on your brow.

Often within the house where we have met
You are an aching presence and a pain,
The cruel obsession of a tortured brain
With only you and loss of you beset.
Each room where you have moved is a regret.
In every spot some self of you is slain.
And "O," I question, "must he die again,
And die a thousand times till I forget!"

But when I plunge into the moving street,
Into the vital sunlight and keen air,
When face to face and life to life I meet
My living brothers, all the old despair
Falls from me; in the faces that I greet
And in the quickened heart-throbs, you are there.

THE DOUBT

THE mortal pang, the gasping breath
 A moment to endure,
And then to meet with you in death —
 If only I were sure!

But O the unknown way to choose,
 And after find it true
That I in outer dark must lose
 The memory of you!

ON A STILL-BORN CHILD

I HAD a little sister once who died
Ere she was born. She was brought forth in peace
Even before the bruising of the world
Had come upon her, so that she might know
What peace is. A white silence wrapped her soul,
That had not stirred nor known any thought,
That had not yearned into the light and sun,
The little soul as still and white as death.
She had not felt a glimmering of desire.
Life was a silence to her and as naught.
Or was it that the little, timid heart,
Fluttering between existence and the void,
Shrank back afraid from feeling and from life,
— So little and so timid and so white! —
We stretched warm hands of love in welcome forth,
But she — she saw beyond us and around,
The huge, remorseless, thunder-crashing world,
And knew that though we yearned to shelter her
We could not, and although our love was warm
And tender, we were frail almost as she.

THE TIRED

QUIET dead, whom others weep,
We have envy of thy sleep.
Dead in us is being's zest;
Easy would it be to rest.
Stooped so low are we by toil
We are near the friendly soil.
Quiet dead, do seeds of Spring
Ever stir thy slumbering?
Does the push of life anew
Wake in thee its yearnings too?
We would lie too deep and still
Even to know the sentient thrill.
We would lie too still and deep
Ever to waken from our sleep.
Surely in the depths of earth
There is resting from rebirth.
Surely somewhere there is peace,
Where the tides of being cease.
Many have with life been blest;
Lord, Thy weary ask Thee rest.

VISION

THEY push and they crowd me,
Invisible ghosts,
The vast concourse of spirits,
The hosts of the dead,
Till, I, too, am lost
In the whirl and the fleeing,
Am swept and submerged
In the hurrying number.
Now at my right,
But a moment past, Cæsar
Gory and crowned!
A wan-checked French woman,
A peasant I think,
Plucks me here at the elbow.
They push and they crowd me
Till I too am swept
In the swirling great number,
The whirl and the fleeing.
Seething and swift
From the seething great cauldron
Lit by the fire
That never shall smolder,
That never shall perish.
The multitudes pour —
Invisible ghosts,
The vast concourse of spirits,
The hosts of the dead.

BLASÉ

I SIT and watch the heated crowd,
The men that come, the men that go,
Their wrangling voices lifted loud —
It interests me, the curious show.

The seasons pass, the day, the night —
I joy not overmuch nor grieve.
The glad and anguished pass my sight,
And they shall leave as I shall leave.

This man lifts eager hands to life,
That one with yearning sees the sod.
Impartial do I view the strife,
As calm and as amused as God.

THE FATHER

OUT of the measureless infinity
We have called into being, I and she,
Another life to burn with life as we.

A little while ago and this child's heart
Was of the darkness and the void a part.
Now prisons it the vital gleam and dart.

We have called into being, she and I,
A man-child dedicate to all things high —
A breath blown like the passing of a sigh.

Quick with the glowing of our quick desire
We have evoked a living heart of fire —
A wind-stirred flame to flicker and expire.

O Lord of heaven and of our compassed earth,
Before Thy mystery of human birth
I feel my slightness and my little worth.

Yea, in my heart knowing the multitude
Of warring passions, dare I name it good
That Thou hast called me unto fatherhood!

TWO SONGS FROM THE GHETTO

(From the Yiddish of Morris Rosenfeld.)

I

THE MILLIONAIRE OF TEARS

'TIS not a golden tuning fork
Attunes my voice to song,
Nor at a beckon from the stars
Do silver fancies throng.
A child's sad whimper in the night,
A wearied worker's moan,
O these alone awake my heart
Its music to intone,
And with a flame my song takes life
From my poor brothers' grief;
Therefore I die before my time,
With meager days and brief.
What will they give me as reward —
In wretchedness my peers?
A millionaire of tears am I;
With tears they pay for tears.

II

WHAT IS LIFE?

If our life is but a sleep
For a few and fleeting years,

72 *TWO SONGS FROM THE GHETTO*

Must my aching eyelids keep
Only wearied dreams of tears?

If our life is but a feast,
We the guests about the board,
May I never taste at least
Some sweet morsel of the hoard?

If the world a garden is,
Where all roses bloom and blow,
Must I, yearning for their bliss,
Ever ecstasy forego?

If the world is but a strife,
Clashing sword and blood that drips,
Then I too can give my life
With a laugh upon my lips.

"BECAUSE MY OWN LIFE FALTERS HERE"

BECAUSE my own life falters here,
Because my own soul burdened is,
I do not make demand of Fate
For the eternal mysteries.

Because I am flung twisted forth,
Because in the making I was marred,
I do not doubt the purpose deep
Behind the heavens calmly starred.

Life justifies in vivid ways
The heart that sees her great and sane;
Strong joy of being have I snatched
From out the fiery midst of pain.

WALT WHITMAN

THIS is the lover of Nature — the man with the
hardy body,
Who trudges along rough roads, who sleeps in the woods
and the open,
Whom Nature claims as her own, as one with her rough-
ness and wildness.
Not the effeminate poet, the delicate treader of flowers,
Playing his lute in pale moonlight, afraid of the sun and
the north wind,
Singing only of love and never of shock and of hardship.

*"THE POWER OF A HEALTHY LIFE I SING" **

THE power of a healthy life I sing,
I sing the joy of cleanliness and strength,
And all free, simple things — the light, the air,
Nourishing food, and country smells and sounds,
The quickening wind of dawn, long, quiet walks,
The liberal, cheering sunlight, gift of gifts,
The cool, delicious, silvery slip and splash
Of water on the body, untired nerves,
The clear eye and the beauty of the form —
I sing the well-poised man with splendid health!

THE QUATRAIN

COMPACT of meaning in a little space,
Do not the quatrain for its length decry.
There speaks not through the body's strength and
 grace
That message read within the flashing eye.

POETRY

MY tremulous soul awaits the god's reception.
Surges the infinite through my finite brain.
The poem! — lo, immaculate conception! —
Born of divinity and human pain.

AFTERWARDS

THIS soul that ponders death
Will go as all souls go,
With ceasing of the breath,
I wonder — will it know!

*"WHAT HAVE I TO DO WITH THE GHOSTS
THAT WALK BY MY SIDE"*

WHAT have I to do with the ghosts that walk by my
side,
Work with me, eat with me, tell me of that or this,
When one whom they say is dead, questions me, vivid-
eyed,
Burns on my brow, on my lips, his yearning, importunate
kiss.

PREMONITION

YOU thought it was your baby's smile and look
 Called forth the mystic flash my glad eyes took.
Ah, 'twas my children that are yet unborn
Who so the deepest being of me shook.

MASTERY

DO not entreat Life, but command!
She bullies those that beg her grace.
But take you once the master's stand,
And she assumes the servant's place.

*A JILTED LOVER ON A LINE OF FRANÇOIS
VILLON*

O VILLON, if I had your knack
Of lines that breathe the amorous South,
My kisses it should never lack . . .
“ Her sweet, red, splendid, kissing mouth.”

TOIL

THE laborer in the noonday glare
Curses the hand that set him there.
The sick man sees it truest heaven
The toiling of the world to share.

DEATH

ULTIMATE fact beyond facts, forever waiting and waiting;

Mystical breath of the twilight of worlds, the brooder on secrets;

Mystic Nirvana, absolver, the yearning, infinite silence;

Thou the enfolder and answerer, thou the solution, the quiet.

SPEAK THE WOMEN OF THE WARRING NATIONS

*By the right of the birth-pangs,
By the anguish at death,
They have knowledge of the oneness
Of those who breathe breath.
They say not their vision,
They know not their dream,
They are seized of prophecy —
But they fear to blaspheme.
They speak the words accepted,
They urge to the strife;
They, bearers of the terrible
Splendor of life!*

THE earth is shaken and riven
With the tramp of the marching men,
From the gleaming sun to the windy moon
'Til the marching sun again.
And cry the women, "With lust go forth,
Go terrible and proud!
Crimson are the hearts' banners,
And the trumpets call loud.

"The sons of our bodies, invincible,
Keen males, hard for the fight —
Go forth with the glory of a conquering race,
Go in the splendor of might."

86 *WOMEN OF THE WARRING NATIONS*

And smile the women, " Now stifle we
The leaping fear that cries.
See, our love has become a challenge
In tearless eyes.

" For shall we, who are weak for the battle,
Do less than suffer in scorn!
With a shout they will fall and with bravado of
singing,
The men-children we have borne."
And say the women, " By the pangs of birth,
By the weary months of pain,
We too have been cleansed as with fire,
Nor strengthened in vain.

" We have taught you the glory of conquest
That with blood and the flame is bought;
For we are meek and loving," say the women,
" And we teach you what we have been taught."
And speak the women, " We are happy,
While you sit in the councils of state,
To do the deeds of your bidding,
And name it our fate.

" You shall show the nations your glory,
The tribes you have mightily won.

You shall wax great in art and in trading;
You shall exult in the sun,"
Exclaim the women, "They shall bow to your glory,
They shall make you tribute of land,
For you are altogether wise," cry the women,
"And destined to command.

"He shall go strong and terrible,
A banner over the host,
His name have we told you from the beginning —
God! Him shall you reverence most,"
Speak they, "for He is unconquerable,
And He shall nourish the strong;
He has pledged that the earth and its peoples
To you shall belong."

The earth is shaken and riven
With the tramp of the marching men,
From the gleaming sun to the windy moon
'Til the marching sun again.
And cry the women, "With lust go forth,
Go terrible and proud!
Crimson are the hearts' banners,
And the trumpets call loud."

THE JEWISH CONSCRIPT

There are nearly a quarter of a million Jews
in the Czar's army alone.—*Newspaper clipping.*

THEY have dressed me up in a soldier's dress,
With a rifle in my hand,
And have sent me bravely forth to shoot
My own in a foreign land.

Oh, many shall die for the fields of their homes,
And many in conquest wild,
But I shall die for the fatherland
That murdered my little child.

How many hundreds of years ago —
The nations wax and cease! —
Did the God of our fathers doom us to bear
The flaming message of peace!

We are the mock and the sport of time!
Yet why should I complain! —
For a Jew that they hung on the bloody cross,
He also died in vain.

THE dreaming earth is choked and fetid with them! —

The beautiful bodies of boys, straight-limbed, sweet-fleshed, lovers, conquerors of life, boastful and passionate,

The weary bodies of toilers, clerks — civilians ugly with dusty living,

The bodies of red-faced, sensual men and the pale bodies of dreamers,

All are tossed into the fallow earth sweet with spring, breaking into blossom in the eternal renewal of the seasons.

O the spring in the fertile meadows!

O the ache of spring, the zealous urge of renewal!

O the white moon, timid and tender, lying young in the pale west of the springtime!

O the odors of spring, the swift rush of her winds and her waters!

What will you do with them, fecund earth? — what will you do with this stuff of blood and of star-dust?

How shall you make over this that was man, these broken bodies strewn upon you, crumbling and rotting?

What shall you use them for? — noisome already! excrement!

Shall you turn them into black, fertile soil and into the
dry dust of the mid-season?

They are nothing!

The earth spawned them forth and the earth has received
them.

And all our dreams are nothing and all curious hopes
and all the eager upreaching of knowledge,

The scheme of the spanner of continents and the desire
of the little husbandman hoarding for his loved ones,

The invention of scientist, artist, the forward-looking
thoughts and the patient toiling,

The heady hopes of youth and the dogged hopes of the
middle-aged and disillusioned,

The anguish of the mother in child-birth, she travailing
to bring forth life in a blind longing!

The seed in the earth has awakened,

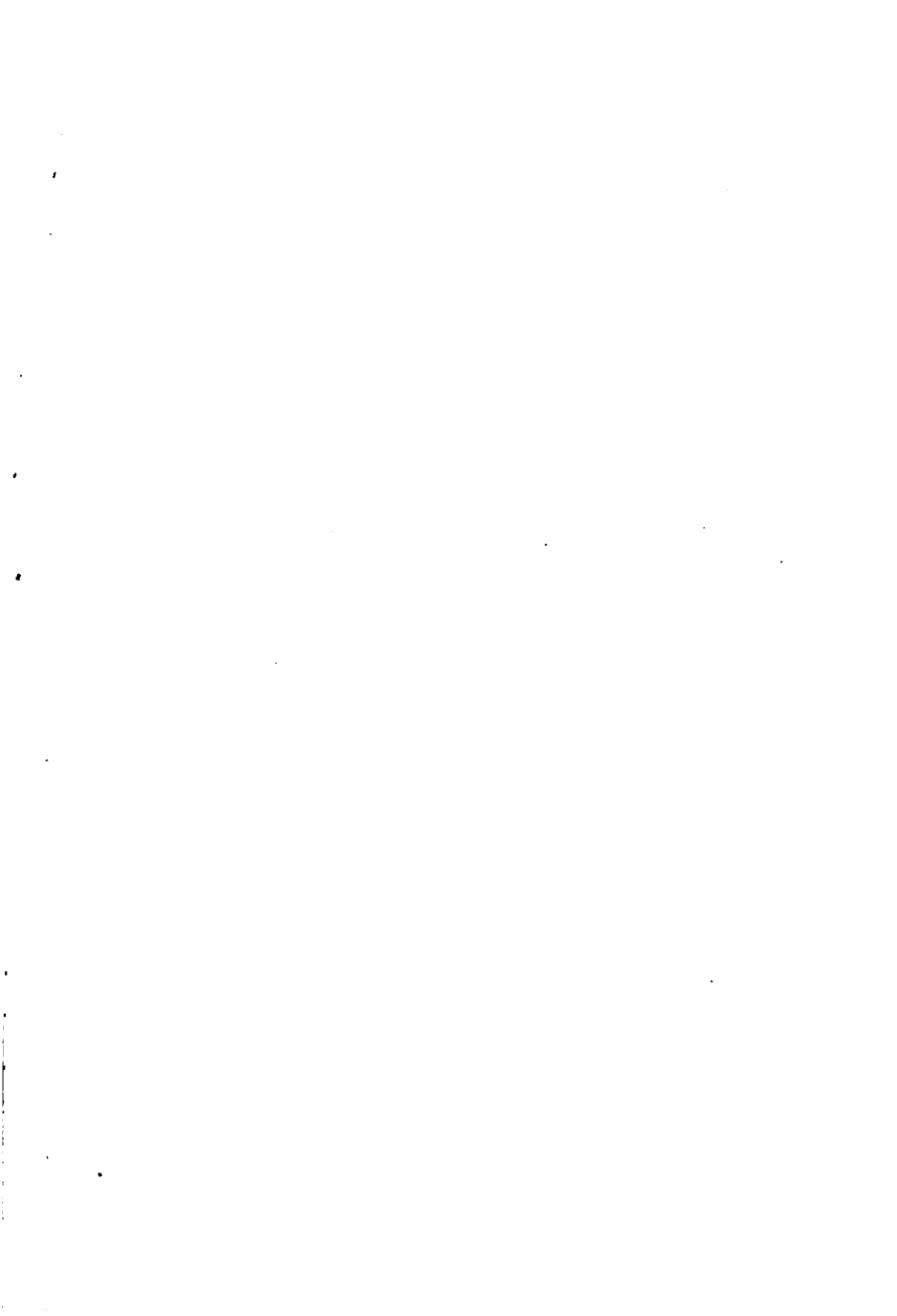
The earth has conceived and the fruits thereof are glad-
ness,

Riotous forces, push of the earth-sap, crowding on
crowding,


Wild winds of spring, sibilant winds of the night-time,

Hints of renewal, change, rumors wind-blown of des-
tiny —

Searches there through chaos the irresistible soul!



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